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A Fugitive in Sight of Haven.

BEING

A PROTEST

AGAINST THE

GOVERNMENT OF MAN BY MAN.

BY

AUBERON HERBERT.

BOSTON:

W. D. TUCKER, PUBLISHER.

1890.



A Politician in Sight of Haven.

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GENERAL

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A POLITICIAN IN SIGHT OF HAVEN.

By AUBERON HERBERT.

[From the Fortnightly Review.]

In a small but cheerful lodging overlooking the Thames, Angus found Markham. After a few words he began to pour out his old troubles. Was it possible to act honestly with party? Did it not lead to a constant sacrifice of convictions, or, indeed, learning to live without them? And then was party itself, morally speaking, better off; would not convictions, if simply and straightforwardly followed, place the party that so acted at a fatal disadvantage in its struggles with its rival? Were not politics an art in which a clever manipulation of the electors, and a nice opportunism in selecting measures that satisfied one portion of the people without too much offending another portion, possessed the first importance, while the high motives and great causes to which all politicians loved to appeal were as bits of broken mosaic that the Jew dealer throws in as a make-weight to complete the bargain?

"What course is open to a man," he asked, "who wishes, above all, to be honest and to speak the truth; who wishes neither himself to be corrupted nor to corrupt the people; who has no desire to preserve any privileges for the richer classes, but yet will not go one step beyond what he believes to be just in gaining the favor of the masses? The common theory of modern government seems to be that we have given power to the people, and therefore, whatever may be our own opinions, we must acquiesce in their wishes. We may dexterously pare a little off here and there, at this or that point, but having placed power in their hands, we must accept and act upon their views. Should it happen that we can add a little semi-spontaneous enthusiasm on our own account, why, so much the better. Now, with this theory I cannot come to terms. I stick at the old difficulty. Shall a man look first and foremost to his own sense of what is right, or shall he follow his party?"

"Does not the question answer itself when stated in words?" replied Markham. "If the world is to make any real improvement, does it not depend more upon the individual resolution to see what is true, and to do it, than upon any possible combination into which men may enter? Is not the great thing that we have to

hope for that a man should cherish and respect his own opinions beyond every other thing in life, so that it should be impossible for him to act in disregard of them? What form of slavery can be more debasing than that which a man undergoes when he allows either a party or a Church to lead him to and fro when he is in no real agreement with it? Truth to your own self or faithful service to your party? Can you hesitate about the choice?"

"But might he not say," urged Angus, "'the highest truth to me personally is to follow faithfully my own party? I feel that I am doing the best of which I am capable when I act under and obey a man whose capacity and devotion to great ends I believe. I prefer his judgment to my own. I do not trust my own views as regards all these complicated questions of the day; but I have faith in those who lead us, and wish to strengthen their hands in all ways possible.'"

"Yes, a man might speak in that sense who accepts the Catholic theory; who is ready to hand himself over to authority, and believes that he need not solve great questions himself, but may leave others to do it for him. If he slavishly give up the attempt to bring this world and that higher part of himself, his own intelligence, into harmony with each other; if he be content to act without seeing the just and the true and the reasonable in all that he does, then he may use this language, and plead an easy faith and easy devotion in excuse for effacing his own reason and making default, as far as he is concerned, in the great plan of the world. Your words are well chosen to snare a man's soul, but they cannot alter the fact that you are born a reasonable being, and that there is no rightful deliverance from the use of your own reason."

"But is not party a necessity?" replied Angus. "Here are two great parties in existence, and is it not a 'counsel of perfection' to say that a man must follow his sense of right, and act in complete independence of party? Suppose all the clearer-sighted and nobler-minded men did this, and retired from party, would it improve matters?"

"Have a little faith, Mr. Bramston, in right for right's sake. More good will come from the best men being true to themselves than from any co-operation of theirs with others. Unless the good man keeps true to himself, you will get but little profit from his goodness which is sacrificed in order that he may work with others."

"But is not party," again urged Angus, "a reasonable thing in itself? Is not co-operation a natural and right means by which men unite their strength to obtain certain results?"

"Yes," replied Markham, "as an instrument, as a means toward a distinct end. A party organized for some common purpose in which men distinctly and definitely agree, in which each unit preserves his own consciousness and volition, is a natural and right instrument for men to use. But you politicians, Mr. Bramston, make party an end and not a means. You do not strive to live in real

harmony with your opinions; you care far more to be one of a party to shout with it, fight with it, win with it."

"But suppose for a moment," said Angus, "that my sense of right went entirely with the most popular measures of the party; supposing that I sincerely approved of every gift which it was possible to take from the richer and give to the poorer. Suppose that I were Bastian—you probably know Bastian—with only this difference, that I believed heart and soul in what I promised, and so long as these services were done for the people I cared but little what was the exact form that they took?"

"And suppose the party were divided by two rival schemes for endowing the people?"

"I probably should be guided by the wishes of the people," said Angus, hesitatingly.

"Yes; that is pretty nearly the only answer which is left you. As you have dismissed your own intelligence as your guide, what else can you do but follow the wishes of the people? And now please to say, Mr. Bramston, however good may be your intentions, is this a true position for any man to hold? Has he the right as regards himself to give others the keeping of his intelligence, to become in consciousness as a polype that leads but a semi-detached life in the polype group? Can he really help his fellow-men by such mental subservience and denial of his own reason? Do you think that progress lies before us if we simply exchange holy mother Church for holy mother Party?"

"And yet," said Angus, hesitating, "granted that men ought not to accept a party programme any more than they accept a Thirty-nine Articles, granted that no man who has freed his mind can take either his theology or his politics in a lump from others, still practically if any Government is to do great services for the people, if it is to educate them, if it is to give them decent dwellings, to improve their sanitary condition, and on all sides to soften and improve the circumstances of life, I cannot disguise from myself that I can do more towards this end by simply supporting the Government than by insisting on my own opinions."

"Ah, Mr. Bramston, you are introducing a large 'if.' You ask me *if* a body we call Government, enjoying certain honors and rewards at the expense of its rival, has for its object, in all the greatest matters that affect human life, to proclaim a certain number of universal schemes, be it for education, for regulating labor, for providing against distress, or for adding to the comforts of existence, whether in such a case we must not dismiss our separate intelligences to the second place, and simply support the Government against the rival that waits to dislodge it. To which question I at once answer 'yes;' as I should if you asked me whether the men who make up an army sent to conquer a neighboring country had better give up their own judgment in all things and be moved at will by the hands of their general. Defeating an enemy and defeating a political rival have

only too many points in common; and in either case separate intelligences would be a great hindrance to success. It would be best in both cases — to use the mildest phrase — that they should be disciplined."

"Is it a fair comparison, Mr. Markham, between what men do in war and what they do in politics?" asked Angus, forgetting that he himself had often compared the two parties to two armies. "We almost all condemn war and its violence; you cannot compare these with the peaceful methods of discussing and voting."

"Are you sure," replied Markham, "that the two systems are so far apart? In war you use force, in politics you only imply force, but it is still there. What reason can you find why twelve millions of men should accept the views of sixteen millions after they have voted, except that it is taken for granted that the sixteen millions could smash up the twelve millions, or as many of them as was necessary, were it a trial of strength between them? You take numbers because they represent force, as conclusive of the verdict in what we call a constitutional country; but can you give me any moral reason that will bear five minutes' examination why you should do so, or why three men should compel two men to accept their views of life? Of course you cannot. Any moral scheme built upon numbers must break to pieces under its own inconsistencies and absurdities. There is only the one reason that superior numbers imply superior force. The sixteen millions are presumably stronger than the twelve, and therefore the twelve submit without having recourse to practical tests."

"But is it impossible," said Angus, "to defend the authority of numbers? May it not be right that if five men differ, the two should give way to the three? It would be absurd to ask the three to submit to the two."

"Why should either two men live at the discretion of three, or three at the discretion of two? Both propositions are absurd from a reasonable point of view. If being a slave and owning a slave are both wrong relations, what difference does it make whether there are a million slave-owners and one slave, or one slave-owner and a million slaves? Do robbery and murder cease to be what they are if done by ninety-nine per cent. of the population? Clear your ideas on the subject, Mr. Bramston, and see that numbers cannot affect the question of what is right and wrong. Suppose some man with the cunning brain of a Napoleon were to train and organize the Chinamen, and then should lead them to annex such parts of the West as they desired; on your theory of numbers, if they exceeded the population of the country they appropriated it would be all right."

"I do not say that it is a satisfactory answer; but might not a majority inside a country afford a right method of decision, without extending the rule to the case of one country against another?"

"On what ground?" said Markham. "From where are the rights to come which you have so suddenly discovered? Do you think that the moral laws that govern men are made to appear and disappear at our convenience? Forget that

you are a politician, Mr. Bramston, and admit that if you can plead any moral law as against the numbers of a stronger race, you must be able to plead it equally against the stronger part of a nation, you must be able to plead it whether on behalf of two men against three, or of one man against a million. Either there are or are not moral conditions limiting force, but if they exist they cannot depend upon numbers."

"Then you would condemn the Birmingham doctrine of the sovereign rights of a majority, and refuse to treat it as the foundation-stone of democratic government," said Angus. "Bright preaches the doctrine eloquently, but I am continually doubting the easygoing philosophy which assumes that the majority will always be on the right side and will only ask for what is just."

"I share the common respect which England has for Mr. Bright," said Markham. "We all instinctively feel that he is more of a man with living beliefs, and less of a politician, than the rest. But can anything be less defensible than his position? He declares force to be no remedy; he declares war, which is force nakedly asserted, to be wrong; but he looks on the outcome of the ballot-box, which is as much force as the orders issued by a Prussian field-marshal, and is only obeyed because it involves the breaking of heads when necessary, almost as a divine and inspired thing. What is the difference between force calling itself force or wrapped up in platform phrases, so long as it has the same self?"

"Then you reject the rights of the majority, and with them the theory of democratic government?"

"I believe myself more democratic than your politicians," said Markham, "but I reject utterly their view of what democracy is. They have not the courage to bid the people to accept universal conditions, but wish, in imitation of departed kings and emperors, to build anew every sort of artificial privilege, as if such privileges, for whomsoever they are created, ever had lasted or could last in defiance of moral law. Well, Mr. Bramston, the world has lived through many lies; it has lived through the priestly lie, the kingly lie, the oligarchical lie, the ten-pound-householder lie, and it has now to live through the majority lie. These other lies are gone to their own place, and this last lie will follow after them. The law of equal freedom and equal justice knows none of them."

"Do you then condemn the use of force for all purposes?" asked Angus.

"Will you undertake to define for me the purposes for which I am and for which I am not to use force? For myself I fail to be able to do it. I cannot suppose that three men have power to compel two men in some matters without finding myself presently obliged to conclude that the three men must decide what these matters are, and therefore that they have powers of applying force in all matters. Between the some purposes and the all purposes I can find no settled boundary. You cannot draw, and no man living can draw, a force-line. If you sat down with Mr. Gladstone to-day to do it, to-morrow his exigencies would

have eaten out the line, and its authority would be gone, at all events for our planet. Do not let us play with these things, and build up pleasant fictions that are of no value. Either a state of liberty—that is, a state where no physical force is applied by man to man—is the moral one, or we must recognize force as rightly applied by those who possess it for all purposes that they think right.”

“Now I become more and more puzzled,” said Angus. “May not the majority apply force for what we call good, and not for bad purposes?”

“Please to define good and bad purposes. You will find that your definitions hold as much meaning as a sieve holds water. If you wish to see how hopeless is the task, read Sir F. Stephen’s book, in which he tells us not to employ compulsion, even if calculated to obtain a good object, if it involves ‘too great an expense.’ What possible binding power is there in such a rule over the minds of men? Where is the common standard of measurement? Who sees with the same eyes the accompanying expense or the resulting good? It is far better to look the truth in the face and to say that when you sanction force for good purposes you sanction it for all occasions which the holders of power think good.”

“But can one be sure that force is a bad thing in itself?” said Angus.

“Do you not see, first, that—as a mental abstract—physical force is directly opposed to morality; and, secondly, that it practically drives out of existence the moral forces? How can an act done under compulsion have any moral element in it, seeing that what is moral is the free act of an intelligent being? If you tie a man’s hands there is nothing moral about his not committing murder. Such an abstaining from murder is a mechanical act; and just the same in kind, though less in degree, are all the acts which men are compelled to do under penalties imposed upon them by their fellow-men. Those who would drive their fellow-men into the performance of any good actions do not see that the very elements of morality—the free act following on the free choice—are as much absent in those upon whom they practice their legislation as in a flock of sheep penned in by hurdles. You cannot see too clearly that force and reason—which last is the essence of the moral act—are at the two opposite poles. When you act by reason you are not acting under the compulsion of other men; when you act under compulsion you are not acting under the guidance of reason. The one is a force within you and the other is a force without. Moreover, physical force in a man’s hand is an instrument of such brutal character that its very nature destroys and excludes the kindlier or better qualities of human nature. The man who compels his neighbor is not the man who reasons with and convinces him, who seeks to influence him by example, who rouses him to make exertions to save himself. He takes upon himself to treat him, not as a being with reason, but as an animal in whom reason is not. The old saying, that any fool can govern with bayonets, is one of the truest sayings which this generation has inherited and neglected. Any fool can reform the surface of things, can drive children by the hundreds of

thousands into schools, can drive prostitutes out of public sight, can drive dram-drinking into cellars, can provide out of public funds pensions for the old, hospitals for the sick, and lodging-houses for the poor, can call into existence a public department and a population of officials and inspectors, provided that he has the handling of money that does not belong to him, and a people not trained to inquire beyond the present moment, and ready to applaud what has a surface look of philanthropy; but what is the good of it all when he has done it? To be compelled into virtue is only to live in order to die of dry rot."

"I see the conflict between reason and force," said Angus; "still, I hesitate in the matter. It is clear that I cannot use force to make people reasonable? Why may we not compel them to educate their children, to give up public-houses, to only work a certain number of hours in the day, and many other things of the same kind? May not force be the instrument of reason?"

"It would be false to call such acts reasonable. You may use your own reason when you say that compulsory education, or compulsory temperance, is good for certain people, and proceed to carry it out; but in so acting you disallow the existence of reason in those whom you compel. You have placed them in a lower rank to yourself, you retaining and using your reason, they being disfranchised of it. Now this unequal relation between men, in which the reason of some is replaced by the reason of others, is one that reason acting universally rejects as a denial of itself. Why should your reason be recognized and not that of the man you compel? Moreover, from a reasonable point of view, can you not see that the very idea of force necessarily involves a fatal absurdity? If A has power over B, you must assume that in the first instance he has power over himself; no man can be master of another man and not master of himself. But if so, then B (unless you assume unequal rights as the basis of social order) is also master of himself, which entirely destroys any rightful power on the part of A to be his master and to make him act against his will."

"I must confess, whether I agree or not with the abstract condemnation of force," said Angus, "that I sometimes regret to see the love of force and the belief in it growing so fast upon us. All our would-be reformers can only suggest compulsion of some kind. The word is always in their mouth."

"Yes, the mood is on us," said Markham, "and utterly debasing it is. We are filled with the Celtic spirit of wishing to govern and be governed; we creep into one pitiful refuge after another, as if anything could save us from our appointed heritage of the free reason and the free act. But I live in faith, Mr. Bramston. *Exoriare aliquis!* The time will come when some Englishman of sturdy common sense, a new *martellus monachorum*, will arise to rout these good gentlemen that wish to tie the English people to their apron-strings, to smash these pagan revivals of Catholicism, this blind submission to authority, to strip these 'cloistered virtues' of their seeming excellence, and bid the people live in a free world,

gaining their own good, trampling on their own sins, and making their own terms with their own souls. But let me ask you, Mr. Bramston, have you read Mr. Herbert Spencer's writings? We shall do little good unless you have done so. We owe to him the placing of this great truth, that man must be free if he is to possess happiness, on its deepest and truest foundations. No discursive talk of ours will really help you until you have felt the marvellous power with which he has read the wider and deeper meanings of the world, and given order to our disorderly conceptions of it."

"I must confess with shame that I have never read his writings. I have always believed him to be the great teacher of *laissez-faire*, and everybody to-day supposes that *laissez-faire* lies on the other side of the horizon behind us."

"Ah," said Markham, "I fear that all you political gentlemen live in a greater state of ignorance than most of us. How can it be otherwise? With your committees and debates, and speeches to prepare, you have but little time for watching the graver discussions that are going on. Like lawyers in busy practice, you have no mental energy left to give to abstract questions; and yet I do not notice that any of you are wanting in courage when you come to deal with the very foundation of social things. So the world believes in the failure of *laissez-faire*? No, Mr. Bramston, it is not *laissez-faire* that has failed. That would be an ill day for men. What has failed is the courage to see what is true and to speak it to the people, to point towards the true remedies away from the sham remedies. But read Mr. Spencer and see for yourself. Believe me, you are not fit to be exercising power over others until you have done so. You had better leave some of your Blue Books unread than remain in ignorance of his work."

"What is that work as regards politics?"

"He has made the splendid attempt," replied Markham, "to give fixity and order to our moral ideas, and to place the relation of men to each other on settled foundations. The love of disorder is so great in the human mind that probably men will yield but slowly to his teaching, perhaps not till they have passed through many troubles. But it is along the track that he has opened out to them, and that track only, that every nation must escape anarchy* and find its happiness."

"And the drift of his other work?"

"I should say that the result was to make the world, as a whole, reasonable to men. He has connected all human knowledge, establishing interdependence everywhere; he has taught us to see that everything in the world is part of a great growth, each part, like the different structures of a tree, developing to its

* Wherever the words "anarchy" and "socialism" appear in this essay, they are used, the one in the ordinary sense of confusion, and the other in the limited sense of State socialism. The author either is not aware that there is a school of Anarchistic socialism, or has not discovered that its teachings in regard to liberty are almost identical with his own.—*Publisher's Note.*

own perfect form and special use, whilst it remains governed by the whole. He has helped us to rise everywhere from the reason that governs the part to the reason that governs the whole; and in tracing back this great growth of the past, compound form rising out of simple form, he has shown us the long, slow preparation towards perfection through which the world has travelled and yet has to travel. It is scarcely too much to say that he has given us a past and he has given us a future. In a time of sore need, when the old meanings were splintered to drift-wood, he has seen that the true meaning of the world was to be found, and in finding it he has restored to us the possibilities of a higher religious faith. The influence of modern science has been to make men too easily satisfied with their own separate and fragmentary knowledge. Each man has settled down in his niche in the vineyard, and there labored industriously and successfully, but with his eyes closed for the wider meanings. To read a learned paper before a learned society, to be highest authority on some special subject, have been objects which have unduly influenced our generation: and it is only such a work as Mr. Spencer's that recalls us to the truth that the use of knowledge is not simply to annihilate a rival on some particular subject that we look on as our private property, but to lead men to understand the great whole in which they are included—to bring that whole into perfect agreement with human reason. Specialism, however necessary, is not the end of science. The end of science is to teach men to live by reason and by faith, by grasping the great meanings of life, and by seeing clearly the conditions under which they can give effect to those meanings. How little science yet helps us in our general conceptions of life you can see by the quiet ignoring amongst politicians of the vital meaning which Darwin's discoveries have for them. And hence it is that, great as has been the multiplication of scientific facts, they have done but comparatively little to reform the ideas and reshape the conduct of men. Our intellectual life still remains thoroughly disorderly, notwithstanding stray patches of science and order introduced into it. It is here that we have so much to gain from Mr. Spencer. We owe to him our power to realize the harmony and unity embracing all things, the perfect order and the perfect reason, and thus to walk confidently with sure aims; and instead of being content to leave science as the technical possession of a few, he has, in a true sense, given it to the people by insisting on the universal meanings and making them accessible to all men."

"On what foundation does Mr. Spencer place political liberty?" asked Angus.

"He founds it on the right of every man to use the faculties he possesses. It is evident, as he insists, that all sciences rest on certain axioms. You remember Euclid's axioms, such as 'a whole is greater than its parts,' and you can easily perceive that any science, however complicated it may be, owing to its dependence on other sciences that have preceded it, must rest on its own axioms. Now politics are the science of determining the relations in which men can live to-

gether with the greatest happiness, and you will find that the axioms on which they depend are, (1) that happiness consists in the exercise of faculties; (2) that as men have these faculties there must be freedom for their exercise; (3) that this freedom must rest on equal and universal conditions, no unequal conditions satisfying our moral sense."

"Why do you insist on my treating these truths, if truths they are, as axioms?" asked Angus."

"Because you cannot contradict them without involving yourself in what is inconsistent and absurd, without giving up the belief that the world is reasonable, and, therefore, that it is worth our while to try to discover what we ought to do. Place before your mind the opposites of these statements, and try to construct a definite social system out of them. Happiness is not the exercise of faculties; men having faculties ought not to exercise them; the conditions as regards their exercise should be unequal and varying. Can you seriously maintain any of these statements? When you propose unequal conditions of freedom do you offer a standing ground which men universally could accept, which they could look upon as the perfect condition of their existence?"

"But might I not claim greater freedom for the abler and better man, for the more civilized race?"

"Why should you? What does any man or any race want more than freedom for themselves? Admit that any one may take more than his share; that is, in other words, that he may restrain by force the exercise of the faculties of others, and in what a sea of moral confusion you are at once plunged. Who is to decide which is the better man or the more civilized race, or how much freedom is to be allowed or disallowed? To settle this question men must act as judges in their own case; and this means that the strongest will declare themselves the most civilized, and will assign such portions of freedom as they choose to the rest of the nation, or the rest of the world, as the case may be. Are you prepared for this?"

"I agree in some measure," said Angus; "but how can you persuade the strongest not to use their strength?"

"Only by strengthening human belief in reason, by bringing men to see that the moral system regulating their actions towards each other is as true and fixed as the system of the planets, its parts as orderly, its whole as reasonable; and that force — I mean in every case physical compulsion of one man by another — has no possible place in it."

"But can men see this reasonableness, this orderliness, of which you speak?"

"Surely," replied Markham. "Is it not plain that between the world, the outcome of the highest reason, and the human reason as it evolves, harmony is ever growing? The evolution of the human mind means that its power increases to read order everywhere; and it is only as it perceives order that it can gain perfect confidence in its own conclusions. You must remember that a science is not

a mere mass of separate truths or conclusions which may, so to speak, lie anywhere as regards each other in the same heap. As Mr. Spencer has so well pointed out, men at first begin by learning the detached truths, and then in later stages see that each truth has its own place in an indissoluble and reasonable whole, which whole, as we learn to perceive it, gives certainty to the separate truths. The separate truths are like beads before they are strung on a string, and which do not gain their full meaning until the string is there. Take Mr. Spencer's example of astronomy. By countless observations you learn that the orbits of planets are ellipses of a certain kind, and then presently you learn the great central cause in obedience to which these forms are what they are; you have gained a master-key which, as you know, will unlock every fact, whether at present within or not within your observation, in the group that belongs to it. Hence it arises that a separate truth only becomes really known when you know the system of which it forms a part. Is it different in moral matters? Do you think that there are order and system for the facts that concern the planet and not for the facts that concern the human mind; for mineral and for plant, and not for the relations in which men are to live towards each other? Do you think that with order and system in every other part of the universe that here you suddenly enter a territory sacred to disorder and conflict, a sort of moral Alsatia, where alone the writ of the Great Power does not run? Surely you cannot defend such a belief. Surely you have some faith in the perfect reasonableness that underlies and overarches everything. To the politician it may be torture to believe that social and political questions are parts of a reasonable whole, and can only be rightly dealt with in strict obedience to that whole. His own course is just so much easier as he may disregard this reason of the whole, as he may by turns plead the law or the exception, as he may ignore all fixed moral relations of men to each other, as he may urge plaintively that all is so uncertain and subject to change; and claim permission to deal with the circumstances that exist as the light of the moment and the ever-urgent personal interest may direct. The world does not see the impertinence and the danger of such claims. It will do so as the consequences of existing mental disorder thicken upon it."

"But do you mean, the world being as it is," said Angus, returning to the old point of attack, "that we can get through it without force? Why, even a London street after dark may require one to use force to protect himself."

"I have not said that. Six months ago I knocked a scoundrel down who had snatched a lady's watch from her, and handed him over to the police. I do not say we can get through life without using force; but when we do so in the simplest and apparently most justifiable case, even to repel force, we are outside the moral relation, and are simply living again in that force-relation in which a man as half animal once lived, and in which the animals now live. Underneath all life lies the great law of self-preservation (a law which we may fulfil either by

using force as the animals do, or by universally accepting the reasonable relation which, forbidding force, guarantees equal freedom to all), and those who use force may compel us to live towards them in the force-relation; but the important thing is to see that it is only when we are living in the reason relation that we have distinct moral guidance to tell us what are right and what are wrong actions, and that in the force relation we must act often by guess-work and always without certain guidance "

" Why am I without moral guidance in the force-relation? Were you not right in knocking the thief down? "

" My justification was, that he had established between himself and the rest of society the force-relation, and therefore I had to deal with him as I should have dealt with a wild beast that had attacked me. The act on my part was so far a moral one, inasmuch as I obeyed the derived moral command to help my neighbor; but being an act done in the force-relation, brute strength being simply opposed to brute strength, it is impossible that I should have that guarantee of certainty as regards right conduct, which can only exist where my actions are in harmony with the whole moral system. Mr. Spencer has stated this with his usual admirable force. 'Ethics, or the principles of right conduct, ignore all crime and wrongdoing. It simply says such and such are the principles on which men should act, and when these are broken it can do nothing but say they are broken.' Thus if there is a command that says, 'Thou shalt not lie,' you have no certain guidance from that command or from any part of the moral system which is subordinate to it when you have once told a lie and choose to persist in it. It may be expedient to tell or not to tell another lie: many excellent secondary reasons, such as regard for your friend, may urge you to do so, but all fixed guidance is lost, for when once the coherence of the system is broken, the law of lesser authority being obeyed and the law of higher authority disobeyed, only conflict and contradiction can arise. To obtain certain guidance you must obey the moral laws in the order of their imperativeness; and whilst in my case I obeyed a derived law which bade me help my neighbor, I was outside the primary law which forbids the use of force. I did no wrong towards the thief, as far as I could judge, but I was acting on a personal judgment that might lead me right or wrong."

" Why do you speak of the act of helping your neighbor as a derived law, and that of not using force as the primary law? " asked Angus.

" Speaking rationally, do not honesty and justice precede generosity? To employ force to a man is to deprive him of what he rightly possesses, the freedom to use his faculties, and therefore is an act which I am bound not to do. To assist him by any gift or service of mine is an act which I am only bound to do in an inferior sense; it is but a development, important as it is, from the imperative command to respect a man's rights."

"Might not some person try to make the laws change place, and insist that to help your neighbor was the primary law?"

"Yes," replied Markham, "if they had no fear of plunging into Serbonian bogs. Which neighbor am I to help, and in what fashion? Am I to help one at the expense of another? Am I, like Robin Hood of old, to take the purse of the rich man and give it to the poor? Try to construct a definite and certain system that is really to guide men in their dealings with each other on such a foundation. You may amuse yourself some day for half an hour, Mr. Bramston, by trying to do it, but you will hardly obtain any other result."

"I see the difficulty," replied Angus slowly. "To say we must do good to others means nothing unless there is some fixed system which allows us to define precisely the nature and conditions of this ever-elusive good."

"Exactly; there must be a fixed system, and that system must spring from rights. Without rights, no system; without system, no guidance. If you wish to realize the moral confusion that results where rights are neglected, glance at the world of to-day, and observe the good qualities which impede rather than assist the general cause of good. Do we not see Nihilists and Invincibles devoting themselves in the spirit of self-sacrifice in order to obey an order of assassination; slave-owners showing kindness to their slaves; politicians carrying out what they believe to be useful measures for the people by appealing to selfish passions and infringing upon the rights of others; Socialists hoping to regenerate the world by deciding in what way and to what extent men shall exercise their faculties. These and a thousand other examples show us that actions springing from good qualities, but done in disregard of primary and moral commands may increase the sum total of unhappiness instead of happiness."

"What do you mean when you speak of primary and derived laws?" asked Angus.

"Necessarily at the beginnings of social life men's actions are confused and in conflict with each other. Presently a stage is reached at which reason asserts its claims to regulate these acts, and then, as we have already seen, it requires of men to respect each other's rights. This, though the necessary condition of all happiness, is not sufficient for the perfecting of it. A second command — inferior in authority and definiteness — succeeds to the first and bids us not only respect rights but also feelings, so far at least as such feelings do not tend to restrict rights. There are many actions which we have, as far as the first command is concerned, a right to do, but which, as they cause unnecessary pain to others, we ought to abstain from doing. To these actions Mr. Spencer gives the name of negative beneficence. Again, succeeding to these acts of abstention are the acts of positive beneficence, the direct acts which men do for the sake of increasing the happiness of others; acts which, as human nature evolves, will become more and more a necessary and integral part of the happiness of each man. But you

can readily see that to add to the happiness of our neighbor, or even to avoid giving him unnecessary pain, excellent as such acts are, are of little moral value unless you begin by respecting his rights. Except on such a foundation they cannot lead to the settled happiness of men; they can only lead to such confusion between good and evil as we see around us at present. And now observe a further development. From respecting rights we learn to recognize the self in each man as the true governing centre of his actions. We learn to see the false side of those great systems which lower and debase a man by offering him comfort — whether it be intellectual or material comfort — at the price of liberty, which weaken his self-guidance and his self-responsibility, and make him but a semi-conscious unit in Churches and parties. We see that all social as well as political systems must be framed not only to make him in higher matters the possessor of his own soul, but in matters of everyday life the intelligent director of his own energies. Do you see how fruitful, how far-reaching, will be the influence of this recognition of the self in each man? Our every act towards others will be shaped and determined by it. Is it a matter of helping some fellow-man in distress, we shall ask, 'Am I merely lifting the man by an external machinery out of a momentary trouble at the cost of depressing rather than increasing his own self-helping energies?' Of assisting masses of men to better their position, 'Can I rightly lighten the burdens of one man by increasing the burdens of another, to however small an extent, and however easily the latter may be able to bear it? Can I do so without weakening in all minds the sense of the universal agreement, and in the minds of those who are helped that self-respect which should only claim free-play for the energies of each?' Of spreading opinion and bringing others within a Church or party, 'Have I joined these men to myself by the true and pure conviction of each soul, or have I treated them as a mere crowd, to be moved as I wished by machinery, to be bribed and cajoled and driven towards the ends that I desired?' Of education, 'Am I mechanically impressing the self of my own opinions on another mind? Am I merely gaining the ends on which the world of the day sets store, and content for the sake of these to follow such lifeless and mechanical methods as promise the readiest success? Am I willing to make my own task easier by employing systems of bribes and threats, or is my one effort to develop another equal being that shall be strong in its own self-confidence and able by its own reason to make a life for itself?' There is no part of human life, no question of morality, that will not be illumined by the light thrown from that intense respect for each human self which in due time will succeed to the perfect recognition of each other's rights. The creed of rights leads as certainly to the elevation of the human race as the creeds of Socialism, founded on force, lead to the degradation of it."

"Could you summarize for me what you said?" asked Angus.

"Using the fewest words, I should say all truths belong to their own system.

There is not such a thing as a stray or independent truth in existence; and it is only as you know the system to which the truths belong, that you know with certainty the truths themselves. Moral truths, then, like physical truths, are united in a system, and as this system must rest on certain assured foundations, the question is on what foundations does it rest? The answer is, in Mr. Spencer's words, on the freedom of men to exercise their faculties. From these foundations arises a coherent and harmonious moral system governing our political and social systems, and illuminating the most complex questions of human conduct. Apart from this foundation, morality is a mass of indistinct and contradictory commands, men often obeying a derived command whilst they disobey a primary command."

"In all you have said you have only used a deductive argument," said Angus; "will you not sacrifice to the gods of the present time by speaking inductively?"

"Ah! that greatest of all inductions! Some younger man with fuller stores of knowledge must give that induction to the world. It will be for him to follow the history of liberty as he would follow a great river in the East, whose banks are covered with rejoicing crops, whilst away from it all remains desert. You can see for yourself how vast is the material that is waiting to be used. Has any race of men ever fairly tried even the humblest experiment of freedom and found it fail? Have not the human faculties grown in every field just as freedom has been given to them? Have men ever clung to protection and restraint and officialism without entangling themselves deeper and deeper into evils from which there was no outlet? But to-night we cannot enter upon these wide fields. There is only one group of facts, those that belong to the history of plant and animal, at which we can glance. See how clearly under Darwin's revelations comes out the saving meaning that there is in competition, the destructive meaning that there is in protection. Protect the plant and animal by some mere external protection, as that of an island or an impassable barrier, and you reserve it for certain destruction when the day comes in which at last the life that has ranged over wider spaces and become better adapted to the conditions of existence enters into competition with it. The very conditions that seemed to protect it have ensured its destruction. Had it not been protected it had passed through the same gradual adaptations that other life elsewhere has passed through. It was separation from the mainland that preserved the Australian marsupials, that has made islands such as Madagascar the interesting relic-houses of a life that had not been competent to survive unless protected. So also has it been that the European plants, which by ranging over wider tracts have more thoroughly undergone selection, have beaten the native plants of La Plata, New Zealand, and, in a lesser degree, of Australia, whilst speaking generally the plants of these countries cannot obtain a footing in Europe: that the intertropical mountains lost their true vegetation, and accepted

those harder forms which in the Glacial period were able to reach them; that the wingless and defenceless birds, such as those of Mauritius, and Bourbon, and Rodriguez, have only been found where beasts of prey were absent. But why multiply examples? The history of the world turns upon the fact of the harder forms, perfected by a wider and sharper competition, inevitably replacing the weaker forms. And do you not also see how the lower kinds of self-protection die out before the higher kinds? The huge armor-plates and spikes that once protected animal life are replaced by higher organizations, better adaptations of bone and muscle, and therefore quicker movements, by improved special organs, by increasing size of brain. It is the same with men. The clumsy restrictions and defences which parliaments provide must give place to those higher forms of self-protection which depend upon mental qualities. Is it not plainly one and the same sentence which nature speaks to plants, to animals, and to men, 'Improve in the true way or be destroyed?' She affixes everywhere her two great conditions of improvement, variety (or difference) that both in the physical and in the intellectual world brings into existence the beginnings of higher life—and competition, that selects for survival these all-precious beginnings out of the midst of the lower forms; whilst outside these conditions she reserves no way of salvation. It is wrong and unfaithful to disguise or evade these truths. Whatever it costs, you must say plainly to all men that variety and competition are the only conditions of their advance, and that these conditions can only exist under a system of perfect liberty. All infringements of liberty sin in a twofold way. They tend to uniformity by excluding natural variety, and they give external protection at the cost of preventing the development of self-protection, saving the pain of the present by doubling it in the future. Does such a law seem hard to you? If so, remember that it is not a competition like that of animals and savages, to be decided merely by physical force or cunning, but one in which the more powerful brain, the truer perception, the more temperate habit, the more upright conduct, shall prevail in the end, and that thus the better type shall be always evolving, while the pain of the passage from the unfit to the fit grows less and less."

"And now," said Angus, "leaving further consideration of the principles, let me ask you for the net result. How would you give practical effect to such views?"

"The government, as pointed out by Mr. Spencer, must confine itself simply to the defence of life and property, whether as regards internal or external defence. You can defend neither of these systems, both of which involve the use of force, on true moral grounds; they can only be imperfectly defended under the law of self-preservation, which we extend to others beyond ourselves. But in the world as it is, those who use force must be repelled—and effectively repelled—by force. By their own act they place themselves in the force-relation, and, barbarous as is the relation, we must accept it just as far as they thrust it on us. Farther the

Government must not go. It must not attempt any service of any kind for the people, from the mere mechanism of carrying their letters to that most arrogant and ill-conceived of all universal schemes, the education of their children. All services which the people require must be done by themselves, grouped according to their wants and their affinities in their own natural groups, and acting by means of voluntary association. The system would be one of free-trade carried out logically and consistently in every direction. We should then be quit both of the politician, with that enormous bribing power which he proposes by offering services to one part of the people at the cost of another part, and of that fatal compression of ideas, energies, and experimental efforts which results whenever universal systems are imposed upon a nation. Those people who wish to make their fellow-men wise, or temperate, or virtuous, or comfortable, or happy, by some rapid exercise of power, little dream of the sterility that belongs to the universal systems which they so readily inflict on them. Some day they will open their eyes and see that there never yet has been a great system sustained by force under which all the best faculties of men have not slowly withered."

"As regards property, what would be the system which a Government ought to defend?" said Angus.

"There is no choice except between an open market in all things—that is, free acquisition and complete ownership—or a more or less socialistic Government. If Government undertakes in any way the task of arranging and distributing property, it at once enters on the force-relation. It presumes to set itself above all fixed moral relations of men, and to create for them out of its imagination the conditions under which they are to stand to each other. And notice that free-trade and free acquisition of all property stand and fall together. Either a man may do the best for himself with his faculties, or he and his faculties may be sacrificed for the advantage of others. Our great effort at this moment should be to reconcile our people heartily to private property, whether in land or in any other thing (Mr. Spencer draws a line between the two, but I am unable to follow him), and to lead them to see that no nation can in any true sense be free which allows a Government of the day to model and remodel that which touches a man's life so nearly as his property. That English land is not largely held by the small owners is a great public calamity, but it is not to be repaired by the greater one of small or big confiscations. Remove at once—as you would have done years ago, had the Liberal party remained true to its traditions, and not gone popularity and sensation hunting, under Mr. Gladstone's leadership—all legal impediments that yet exist to free sale. Insist that the living owner should be the full owner in the sight of the law courts; avoid all ridiculous measures for patching up the present landlord and tenant system, and the land will soon naturally and healthily find its way into the hands of the people. Any way, it is better to bear the evils of delay than to demoralize a whole nation in their spirit

and their aims by accepting the bribes of the politician to take from the few to give to the many."

"And taxes, Mr. Markham?" asked Angus.

"All taxes must be voluntary," said Markham.

"Voluntary!" said Angus, drawing the longest of breaths.

"There is no moral foundation for taking taxes by force. Those who pay taxes have not put themselves outside the reasonable relation, and therefore you cannot justly compel payment at their hands. The Dissenters were on the right track when they refused to pay Church-rates, and every measure to which a man objects is a Church-rate if you have the courage and the logic to see it. Your present plan, Mr. Bramston, is to tread men's objections as mere soil under your feet. It won't do. No plan by which one man treads another man's freedom of action underfoot will do. Besides, Mr. Bramston, can you not see what lies before you in the near future? This unjustifiable power of taking money from others, even from those unborn, has led to such extravagance, such waste, and such heavy burdens that the people everywhere, improving upon the honest methods of the politicians, are beginning to ask the question, 'Granted that, as you teach us, our wishes are the law of right, why should we pay debts we have never incurred?'"

"And what about the debt itself?" asked Angus.

"An upright people, not trained to juggling metaphysics about the right and the convenient, will redeem, and ought to redeem, every penny of it. But they must do so voluntarily. The question has its difficulties, but I can find no right to force payment from those who did not contract it, great as I think would be the wrong towards the holders if it were not paid. I should give the holders a mortgage on all existing national property."

"And the franchise?" asked Angus.

"The franchise would depend on the payment of an income-tax for which everybody, down to the lowest workman, would be voluntarily liable. Everybody, man or woman, paying it would have the right to vote; those who did not pay it would be—as is just—without the franchise. There would be no other tax. All indirect taxation, excise and customs, would be abolished, freeing the trading genius of the country with results that we can scarcely foresee."

"And could you ask the workmen to accept such a tax?" said Angus.

"If you wish to treat them as equal reasonable beings with yourself and to speak the truth to them, if you wish them to cultivate the highest kind of self-respect, to despise all favors and bribes, and to share power because they share burdens—yes," replied Markham. "If you mean to continue the politician's game, to trade upon the selfishness and the unfairness that are in human nature, to tread the principle of true equality under foot, and buy all those who can be bought for your side—no."

"And municipal government, with its care of streets?" asked Angus.

"You must let me reserve that matter for our next talk."

"And existing institutions—the Established Church, the House of Lords, the Crown—what would you do?" asked Angus.

"I fear that I must look upon them all as signposts that point the wrong way and condemn themselves. All privileged and artificial institutions, whether for the few or the many, are destructive and anarchical in their character, as they obscure our perception of the great and simple moral relations on which our dealings with each other must be founded. Our subject is to teach the people to look on the equal and universal relations that are created by liberty as the most sacred thing in the world, and we must spare no darling institution of any class tending to perpetuate the idea of privilege."

"And Ireland?" asked Angus.

"Ireland must decide for herself," said Markham. "Why not grant its freedom for the sake of principle instead of for the sake of convenience, as you will do in a few years. But the landowners should be bought out; and if the north-east of Ireland elects to stay with England, let it do so."

"Would Mr. Spencer agree to such applications of his principles?" asked Angus.

"I fear that Mr. Spencer would dissent. You must not regard him as responsible for the corollaries which I have drawn.* He would say that a truly equitable social system can be reached only as fast as men themselves become truly equitable in their sentiments and ideas, and in the meantime we must decide as well as we can on the relatively right, referring continually to the absolutely right, with the view of taking care that we move towards it, and not away from it," replied Markham.

"And now once more for the net result," said Angus. "What would be the effect of carrying out such a policy?"

"Why, such a lightening of the ship as would give her power to float in any weather. You are sadly weighing and crippling her now. You do not recognize how enormous is the amount of enterprise and energy that is restrained by this ever-encroaching matter of politics; not simply because whenever the State undertakes a great service even those who possess the most energy cease to think and to combine and to attempt for themselves, but by the sheer misdirection of effort. How many men there are who could give more time and thought to their own work—which is the true way of benefiting others—if they were not obliged to be politicians. You have made these bloated politics of such importance that the busiest workers can neither afford to follow them with any care nor yet to

* Perhaps I should here point out quite distinctly that the proposal made by Mr. Markham to place taxation on a voluntary basis, whether in itself a right or wrong deduction from Mr. Herbert Spencer's principle, has never received Mr. Herbert Spencer's approval; but, as I have some grounds for believing, would be looked on by him as an unpractical and undesirable arrangement.—A. H.

neglect them. To all such men they are a perpetual vexation and distraction. If you wish to economise the best brain-energy of the country, reduce politics to the humble sphere that belongs to them, reduce Mr. Gladstone and Lord Salisbury to the smaller proportions for which two such men, highly gifted as they are, are fitted; disband this frightful standing army of politicians that, like other armies, eats up the people whom it claims to serve, and return it to useful occupations in civil life. Our great object should be not only to bring to an end the wasteful processes of Government work—the overgrown departments, the official mis-managements, the heavy burden of taxation, the innumerable occasions of rivalry, of personal ambition, and corrupt uses of power—but to recall all human effort from a wrong direction and to put it in the one right track. We have to make each man a profitable worker by leaving him with undivided energies for his own work instead of letting him attempt to direct the work of others, and to place him under the one true and natural condition that his reward shall be all he can get in a free world, self-earned, and not adjusted for him by others. Achieve this great though simple result, and we should bring about a mental regeneration within a nation as great as if, in their external relations, nations were to abandon the idea of war. Of all perverted industries, that of accumulating force, whether in great bodies of soldiers or great bodies of electors, is the most wasteful and disastrous, not only because, as we have seen, the effort to obtain the possession of force is in itself an immense consumption of energy that should go for other things; not only because, so long as men are intent upon becoming the holders of power, they are blind to the true remedies; not only because systems founded on force are fatal to the two conditions of difference and competition, apart from which unfitness can never be changed into fitness; not only because all fixed laws of moral right and wrong disappear in the presence of force; not only because the world can find no repose or security as long as all the great matters of life are left in suspense, to be shaped and reshaped by those who have climbed yesterday or to-day to power; but because, so long as we live under force, compelling and compelled, so long the affections and sympathies of men for men—all that is lovely in human nature—must remain sealed from breaking into universal blossom, like the plants of the earth remain sealed so long as winter is with them. Man is predestined to find his complete happiness, as Mr. Spencer teaches, only when the happiness of others becomes to him an integral part of his own; but this development of his nature cannot take place unless he is living under those true conditions which belong to a free life. So long as force is paramount, so long must men stand in hate and fear of each other, and the old saying, *homo homini lupus*, remain true.”

“And now, Mr. Markham, granting the force that there is in much that you say, there remains the great question—is it possible to look on such a view as practical?”

“Practical!” said Markham, slowly shaking his head. “And do you think,

Mr. Bramston, that you politicians are the practical people? Under the name of serving your party you press on along an unknown road, no man really taking the responsibility of his own actions, no man knowing, or even trying to know, where he is going. How would any politician of the day meet my demand if I were to ask him to sketch the future of England as he desired and as he expected to see it? Would he not excuse himself from the task; or, had he the courage to attempt it, would not his picture consist of a few incongruous conceptions thrown together, some not possible, some not probable, resembling in its want of definite ideas an animal drawn by a child, with the wings of a fowl and the legs of a horse? And yet in the midst of such mental incoherence you have the courage to act as if you were assured that the power in your possession were a divine gift, and that some shaping hand that you do not see would interpose to give order and meaning to what you do. Practical, Mr. Bramston! Is it practical to have created the relations that exist between you and the people? You meet them not to speak the truth, not to confess real difficulties, not to try to understand the real conditions under which men have to live, not to raise them in their self-respect, not to check the human tendency to selfishness and violence, and to bring out the reasonable self, but you speak to them as holders of power on whom power confers the right to be a law to themselves; and this you do in order that you may extract their votes from them. You are but courtiers of the people, as your fathers before you were courtiers of kings and emperors. If you call this practical, Mr. Bramston, I desire myself to have no share in what is practical. Practical! And do you think that when to-morrow succeeds to this reckless competition of parties, and you are called upon to deal with the greed you have appealed to, the expectations you have raised, the rash beginnings you have made, to-morrow, when the untruth, the weakness, and the personal rivalries of men who lead the people, not by real convictions but by beliefs assumed at the moment, when all these ugly things come home to roost, when that dangerous lust of power which is in all human breasts, and can only be conquered by the sense of the rights of others has taken its full possession of us, do you think in that day of consequences that you will be satisfied that you were the practical people? Practical! And yet you do not see the meaning of the very things which you are doing. You call yourselves Tory, and Whig, and Radical,—there is as much meaning in the names of Shiite and Sonnite; there was more in those of Guelph and Ghibelline. Can you not see that there are only two creeds in the world possible for men; that there are only two sides on which a man can place himself? Are you for a free world, or for a world placed under authority? Are you Socialist, a believer in the majority, a believer in force, or do you take your stand on the fixed and inalienable rights of the individual? These mixed and party systems, by which you set so much store, are only half-way huts in which the race sojourns for a day, and then burns behind it. Because you yourselves are confused, indistinct, and inconsistent in your ideas, do you think that the race, as a race, will stand

forever, like recruits beating the ground in the drill-yard and march nowhither? Time is a great logician, and succeeding generations will either press steadily on to the system that is the perfection of force, Socialism, or to the perfection of liberty, complete Individualism. If men believe that they may rightly use force to gain any of their objects, they will claim in their supposed interest to use it for all their objects; if force is not a right weapon, then they will altogether abandon it. On which side then do you take your stand? I look at the parties of today and I can get no answer. Is Mr. Gladstone, with his many regrets and apologies, is Lord Salisbury, with his easy adaptiveness, for or against liberty? The one and the other seem to me equally ready to betray it for their necessities. But whatever be the issue of the present, that the world will remain in Socialism—of that I can have no fear. The system is doomed by the great laws as inexorably as the Tower of Babel. I do not say it may not descend upon us for a time, like a great pall, blotting out all hopes of progress in our time. It may be that the race must pass through their season of it, as men pass through some delirious illness. After all it is only an old story repeating itself. Socialism is but Catholicism addressing itself not to the soul but to the senses of men. Accept authority, accept the force which it employs, resign yourself to all-powerful managers and infallible schemers, give up the free choice and the free act, the burden of responsibility and the rewards that come to each man according to his own exertions, deny the reason and the self that are in you, place these in the keeping of others, and a world of ease and comfort shall be yours. It is a creed even more degrading than Catholicism, but it offers more tangible bribes for its acceptance. Still, Mr. Bramston, we must fight on. As the old darkness and mental cowardice come back upon us, we can only trust that the old light and courage and faith that protested may come back also. Mr. Spencer has set us a bright example of fearlessness in thought and speech. No man quite knows what that magical weapon, truth, can do when he sets himself resolutely to use it. I would rather choose it for our side than either Mr. Gladstone's eloquence or Mr. Chamberlain's organization. But the night is fast stealing away. I shall be glad to meet you again. Meanwhile study Mr. Spencer until his methods of order and reason become an intellectual necessity to you. And now, are you a reader of Browning? If so, repay me for my long talk by reading me *Galuppi* whilst I light my evening pipe."

"What a strange evening's work," said Angus to himself as his foot crossed the threshold. "Voluntary taxation, and ministers out of employment! How those dear wise fools in the House would shout at the idea; but then every fish believes in the swim to which he belongs. Ah!" he sighed as he walked along the Embankment, and the blue smoke of his cigar parted the fresh night air, "if this were the disentanglement of the mess,—the perfect creed of liberty, the true acceptance by each man of the rights of the other, and yet——"





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